

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

303 - Quality Rated Programs

381 - Infant Toddler teachers attended GAPITC training on October 19

45 - Infant Toddler teachers attended GAPITC training delivered in Spanish on October 19

150 - State and local officials participating in Voices Georgia Pre-K Week

55,083 - Georgia children receiving Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) in October 2013

710 - Participants in INCENTIVES program received bonus awards totaling \$333,625 for earning early childhood education credentials in October

Quick Links

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Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Bobby Cagle

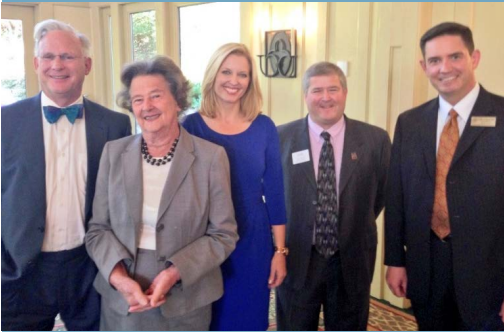


Tradition tells us that after they had gathered their first harvest in the "New World," the Pilgrims held the first Thanksgiving in 1621. Starting a new life in an uncharted land, we can only imagine the things they were thankful for as they shared this meal together with Native Americans...a meal, historians tell us, that lasted for three days. By 1863, this annual ritual became a national holiday when President Abraham Lincoln officially added it to our American calendar on the fourth Thursday in November.

With Thanksgiving soon upon us, I would like to list some of the things I am thankful for this year as Commissioner of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. Admittedly, it may not be as enjoyable as a roasted turkey with all the trimmings, but I hope you can appreciate these DECAL points of pride from the past year:

- I am thankful to Governor Nathan Deal and the Georgia General Assembly for restoring the full 180-day calendar for Georgia's Pre-K Program and passing legislation that allows us to conduct national background checks on all employees in a child care program, better protecting the health and safety of Georgia's youngest learners.
- I am thankful for the results of the longitudinal study of Georgia's Pre-K Program, showing that children, on average, make significant gains in language, math, and behavioral skills.
- I am thankful for the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS), Family Connection Partnership, and other public-private partners who helped us officially launch and promote to parents Quality Rated, now with close to 1,400 participating child care programs and over 260 programs now rated with one, two or three stars. I am equally thankful for the opportunity in July to stand beside Governor and Mrs. Deal at the State Capitol as these programs were recognized publicly. What a great moment.
- I am thankful for the teachers, providers, parents and child care advocates who helped us create and now implement the new Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) - created by Georgians for Georgians - and reminding us about "play with a purpose."

Child Development Association Turns 45



DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle (far right) joined with (L-R) Roswell Mayor Jere Wood, Sandy Springs Mayor Eva Cohn Galambos, WSB-TV's Linda Stouffer, and Alpharetta Mayor Pro Tem D.C. Aiken this week to celebrate the 45th anniversary of the Roswell-based Child Development Association (CDA). CDA provides affordable early learning programs and childcare for preschool children of low-income families in the metro Atlanta area. To learn more, [click here](#).

Open Enrollment Period Ends Soon

The annual Open Enrollment period for the 2014 Flexible Benefits and Healthcare Plans ends on Friday, November 8, 2013.

If you have not already done so, please create your username and password for your 2014 healthcare enrollment activity with the State Health Benefit Plan by accessing the new State Health Benefit Plan ADP portal at <https://myshbpga.adp.com/shbp/>. Once you have created your username and password, you will be able to review the 2014 Open Enrollment information prior to making your selection. If you experience problems, you should contact their call center at 1-800-610-1863.

For your 2014 Flexible Benefits Program, you will need to complete the new security questions www.GaBreeze.ga.gov prior to enrolling or making changes. If you need assistance accessing your account, call the GaBreeze Benefits Center Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at 1-877-342-7339. You'll need to provide your name, date of birth, zip code, and last four digits of your social security number to access your Flexible Benefits information.

November Birthdays



- I am thankful for the work of a special 45-member task force to improve and refine Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program to benefit the children and families who need it most.
- I am thankful for the 84,000 four year olds in Georgia's Pre-K Program this year and another great Voices for Georgia's Children Pre-K Week with more than 150 state and local officials reading to our students and touring their classrooms.
- More recently, I am thankful for the many DECAL employees in every division who poured our hearts and souls into the application for the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant competition. As you know, this could mean over \$52 million for Georgia to improve our early learning and development programs and close educational gaps for children with high needs. Even before knowing the outcome, I can say you are all winners through your commitment and dedication to this process, and I hope to celebrate with you soon!
- Most of all, I am thankful for each of the 250 employees who make up the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. We welcomed several new faces who will make us a stronger agency and celebrated the retirement of others who have left a legacy of outstanding public service to Georgia children and families.

Speaking of families, I would be remiss if I concluded this column without thanking my mom and dad, who by their own unselfish choice, adopted me into their family as a baby and gave me the opportunities that have brought me to this day and to the work that I enjoy so much. For their love and support, I am eternally grateful and forever in their debt.

Have a very happy Thanksgiving this year and know you are appreciated by this commissioner.

DECAL Priority:

Health & Safety

Connecting Georgia Farms to Child Care Programs

DECAL joined Georgia Organics in celebrating "Farm to Preschool Day" on Friday, October 18. Child care programs were encouraged to take field trips to farmers' markets, visit a local farm, host a taste-test using locally grown fruits and vegetables, and other activities to help promote good lifelong food habits and attitudes.



"Child care programs across Georgia are promoting good nutrition at an early age," said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. "Many programs have planted gardens at their facilities where children can see firsthand how fruits and vegetables are grown and then prepared for meals and snacks that are both delicious and nutritious."



Jennifer Popadiuk

"Farm to Preschool Day helps us recognize the significant role that farmers and agriculture play here in Georgia," said Jennifer Popadiuk, DECAL's Nutrition Project Manager. "From sweet Georgia peaches to peanuts and world famous Vidalia onions, Georgia is one of the top states in the nation producing a wide variety of fruits and vegetables - including tomatoes, cantaloupes, cabbage, blueberries and more. We have over 47,000 farms across the state, and you might be

Best wishes go out to the following DECAL employees who celebrate birthdays this month:

- 1 - Connie Fisher
- 2 - Robin Currie
- 2 - Mary Renfroe
- 3 - Rachel Fowler
- 4 - Rian Ringsrud
- 6 - Joyce Collins
- 6 - Leah Klatzker
- 7 - Elizabeth Abdinoor
- 8 - Arlene Green
- 9 - Leslie Truman
- 10 - Shannon Carroll
- 10 - Edna Zimmerman
- 13 - Colleen Covey
- 13 - Andrea McFarland
- 14 - Jessica Grant
- 14 - Rommel Telfair
- 16 - Shyreeta Hicks
- 16 - Nikiesha Neil
- 17 - George Davis
- 17 - Brenda Haynesworth
- 17 - Colette Upshaw
- 19 - Deanna Hibbard
- 22 - Lisa Rambhajan
- 23 - Michael Chandler
- 24 - Earlene Huston
- 25 - Lisa Casey
- 25 - Rita Lang
- 30 - Roslyn Coleman

Board of Early Care and Learning

Supporting and guiding the mission and vision of Bright from the Start:

Board of Early Care and Learning

Kay Ford, Savannah
First Congressional District

Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District
(Secretary)

Kathy Howell, Carrollton
Third Congressional District

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain
Fourth Congressional District

Carlene Talton, Decatur
Fifth Congressional District

Dawn Henderson, Marietta
Sixth Congressional District

Sherron Murphy, Lawrenceville
Seventh Congressional District

Luann Purcell, Ed.D., Warner Robins
Eighth Congressional District

surprised to find many of them in our larger metropolitan areas."

In September, DECAL, Georgia Organics, and Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) held a two-day "Farm to Preschool" summit in Atlanta where regional experts shared best practices in gardening, food education and innovative local food procurement strategies.

[View this video](#) for more information on the Farm to Preschool Program.

DECAL Priority:

Quality

DECAL and GEEARS Participate in Family Block Party

DECAL joined the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS) on October 12 for Atlanta Parent Magazine's Family Block Party on the Mercer University Atlanta Campus. Our exhibit, "Building Better Brains," was a huge hit with families while promoting Quality Rated, Georgia's voluntary system to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs.



Child Care Services Team Raises Breast Cancer Awareness

October was Breast Cancer Awareness Month and DECAL's Child Care Services Team brought the message home strong at their meeting in Macon: Winner of Pinkest Person was Child Care Consultant Zara Handsford. [Click](#)

(Vice Chair)

Tammy Lenkeit, Flowery Branch
Ninth Congressional District

Janice Gallimore, Greensboro
Tenth Congressional District

Victor Morgan, Cartersville
Eleventh Congressional District
(Chair)

Jerri Kropp, Statesboro
Twelfth Congressional District

Judy Neal, Stockbridge
Thirteenth Congressional District

Vacant
Fourteenth Congressional District

*We are committed to nurturing
Georgia's youngest children, keeping
them safe and healthy, and to enriching
their lives.*

your brain is only young once

If your child is 5 or under, now is the time
to help them live a happier, healthier life.

Introducing Georgia's
community-powered early
education rating system.

Make the right choice
for your child.
Choose Quality Rated.



**QUALITY
RATED**
right place bright future

qualityrated.org
877-ALL-GAKIDS

The Faces of DECAL

*DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue
are (L-R) Andrea Marable, Ashley Shirah, Carol
Hartman, Deanna Hibbard, Ettoniet Anderson,
Cassandre Jakes-Beasley, and Rian Ringsrud.*

[here](#) for more information on Breast Cancer Prevention.



Georgia's Pre-K Week Celebrated

This year's Georgia's Pre-K Week with Voices for Georgia's Children was another huge success. Held September 30 - October 4, the purpose of the week is to highlight the important role Georgia's Pre-K Program plays in Georgia's education continuum. This was the third year DECAL has partnered with Voices.



"Research shows that the early education of children from birth to age five proves critical to their success in kindergarten and elementary school," said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. "As a result, we believe investing in our youngest learners is important not only to their personal success but also to the long-term economic growth and potential of Georgia."

Nearly 150 state officials, including Governor Nathan Deal and First Lady Sandra Deal, visited some of the approximately 3,800 Pre-K classrooms located in all 159 Georgia counties. Officials read books to the children, took tours of the facilities, talked with staff, and got an up-close look at the ways centers and schools support early learning.

Recognized as one of the best in the nation, Georgia's Pre-K Program was created in 1992 after voters approved the creation of the Georgia Lottery for Education to support college scholarships and a voluntary prekindergarten program.



Georgia House Speaker David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge) celebrated Georgia's Pre-K Week with Commissioner Bobby Cagle on Friday, October 11, 2013, at Ellijay Primary School.

DECAL Priority:

Organizational Excellence

DECAL Participates in GSU Job Fair

DECAL recently participated in Georgia State University's Early Childhood Education/Birth-Five Job Fair. Representatives from the agency discussed with students career opportunities both here in our agency and in the field of early childhood education. In top photo, Carrie Spangler (left) and Bill Folsom are ready to meet students. In photo below (L-R) Faith Duncan, Mary Stoklas and Carrie Spangler are ready to discuss their divisions with students and teachers.

